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SEVEN PLAIN SERMONS
FOR
Harvest Thanksgiving Services.

BY THE REVS.

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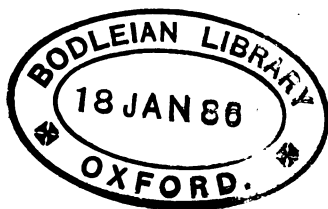
W. C. VAUGHAN.

London:

SKEFFINGTON & SON, 163, PICCADILLY.

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1885.

100. f. 249.



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Harvest Preaching.

STUDIES IN CORN.

BY WILLIAM C. VAUGHAN.

S. LUKE XVI. 9. (*Revised Version.*)

“ Make to yourselves friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness ; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles.”

I CAN see, in my mind, a lad guiding a plough. Shouting cheerily to his team he makes his furrow straight as a dart across the field. Backwards and forwards he goes in the crisp air of an October day ; his shadow falls beside him as he moves along ; and from morning till twilight is ready to fall he scarcely ceases. What is he at ? He is preparing the ground for the seed corn.

And when the corn has been planted and harrowed in, long time the farmer has to wait before the green shoot appears above ground, but he cares not for that. And heavy rains fall, but he cares not for that. And sharp frosts set in, cutting off many things in other

places that have begun to sprout too soon, but he fears not for his young wheat. And the deep snow comes down from Heaven, and he rejoices. And when the sun shines, or the moon has risen, every blade casts its own tiny shadow by its side.

So it waits till harvest. Then the reapers cut down the golden ears and pile a mighty load. The sun glows overhead. The sweat pours from the wagoner's face and off the flanks of his reeking horses as they toil on the dusty road. The air is full of pleasant voices,

"The poetry of earth is never dead."

And the shadows of man and beast fall beside them as they move along.

The harvest is reaped and gathered, but it is not threshed. There is again much hurrying to and fro. The threshing-machine whirrs on late into night's darkness. Strong backs of men take away the winnowed corn. And wherever there is light, there also the shadows fall.

It is threshed, but not ground. The mill-wheel must go round driven by the rushing water. The great stones must bruise and crush the corn between their weight. Again horse and man have to strain nerve and sinew to take it off to be turned to account. And where they go there their shadow goes with them-

So much labour for a little corn ! So much toil to procure food for the bodies of men ! And so much of it to be done after the harvesting is over !

In these scenes we see Preparation, Patience, Labour with Cheerfulness, and—a Shadow not to be escaped from.

Preparation. Without that the land would not yield its goodness to the corn. Such of the corn as took root and ripened would give a return inferior in quality. Great part would not take root at all, but would be lost. Everywhere weeds would spring up unchecked. A farmer might tell us many other disadvantages ; for, after all, ploughing is only a part of the preparation.

Now, the seed is the Word, the field our hearts. As adequate preparation in the beginning is necessary for the success of every other undertaking, so it is in religion. You cannot turn to prevailing prayer immediately from a song or a jibe. You cannot expect to receive grace from Heaven above, unless you attune your heart in some measure for its coming. You cannot dream of overcoming a temptation, if, though you know it to be on the way to meet you, you take no steps whatever to subdue or escape it. Out of this has arisen the decent custom of being reverently silent, hushing our voices as we draw near the Church

door to service : and that other habit of many religious people of keeping as free as they can from all conversation altogether, on the morning they receive Communion, until the celebration is over : and not beginning to laugh and chatter quite at once then. Root out ill habits, pull up bad ways, and there will be opportunity for good dispositions to commence their growth in you. Turn over with grave earnestness your manner of life sometimes, parting from giddy thoughts and inattentive mind : make some effort to leave the ground clear for God's message to sink into your heart, and do not fear but that it will find entrance. But if you never prepare yourself for anything good, how can you expect good to find you ; or, if it does, to take any hold upon you ?

Then Patience. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it." After he has done his part he knows the seed must have time to shoot, and after that to ripen. No fidgetting or fretting will make any difference. Past experience has taught him frost will not hurt it : snow will warm the young roots : wind and storm, what matter they to a well-drained field and a blade scarce above ground !

"Nature is always wise in every part."

In due season will come the time of reaping. And

if he be a God-fearing man he knows that "come rain, come shine," he and his will inherit blessing from God.

God also has patience. He has His Day of Harvesting, but He does not hurry it. He leaves good and evil *time* to work out their probation. Let us have patience too. With ourselves, and with our neighbours.

Do not think that because you have surely received the good seed in your heart, you must therefore become good like a Saint, in a day. In preparing and waiting a farmer has to let great part of the year go by. You have the whole of life to *begin* to be good in. There is no need to be discouraged because all faults are not conquered at once, though you have never so firmly resolved against them : nor because all virtues are not gained at once, though you have set yourself never so zealously to practise them. Only be sure that you are really striving against sin, are really set upon fulfilling righteousness : be content to believe it will take time to subdue the one and let the other grow to perfectness : and that God will suffer you to have a struggle to root out weeds and turn your fallow ground to better use.

Whether your life be long or short it is long enough to begin doing that : the mighty Hands above will finish the work ; and that patience which you need yourself give your neighbour. I knew a lad who

was for ever (as we say) flying off into high tempers, and for ever coming to say, "I am so sorry, I will try to be better next time." Brave lad! So long as his heart was set with constancy to master his temper, in the end he would triumph. If only we have patience to persevere towards right, we may stumble many times on the way, but at the last we shall gain it.

Then Labour. The farm boy goes home so weary he can only eat his supper and tumble off to bed. In harvest the man leaves off so tired he is fain to do likewise. Of course every day is not so hard; but every day there is work:—"In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread"—no one need murmur at that.

And along with labour Cheerfulness.

What should we say to the man who began the day grumbling because the horses wanted looking to, or the morning air was keen? What to the harvesters who went about with long faces and complaining tongues? To the miller who arrayed himself in discontent? But the pictures we are used to are different: and this cheerfulness in the midst of labour adds a chief charm to our country scenes.

Not otherwise should it be in religion. If it need patience it brings also work: there is no such thing as true religion indolent. Is no sinful disposition to be

resisted or fled from, because to do so would involve a manful struggle : then where shall we find the pure in heart ? Are our natural passions to go as unrestrained as those of the brute beasts, because it requires perpetual watchfulness to check them : then where shall the hero be who is greater than he that taketh a city ? Shall no one give to him that needeth, because the effort to help conscientiously the deserving, and to discourage the thriftless, brings many anxious thoughts and oft disappointments : then where shall be found the charity which covers a multitude of sins ? Shall no one set himself with single eye to follow righteousness, because to do so he must bend to the task all his strength of mind and soul and heart and body : then where would have been the Saints of bygone Christian days ?

In all these is labour. But true religion does not consist in the indolent hearing of a sermon, or attending a service, or doing those good things which cause us no trouble : but in the ceasing to love this present life and its pleasures, for the sake of that other life which is to come.

And with work Cheerfulness. My Master is good to me, I must not serve Him with a woe-begone heart. Not my sins, not my temptations, shall cause me to :— they need sore weeping over in secret, they must not

make me shame my beautiful religion with a gloomy face. Not my household cares : I have none : for they are all safe in my Lord's keeping. Not family griefs : they have been keen and bitter : but they are hid with Christ. Not the guilt and suffering I meet in the world ; nay, not even that ; for the goodness of God is greater than the world's evil, and will overcome it in the length : and therein I rejoice, yea and will rejoice.

Thus the Harvest brings before us, amongst other things, the call for Preparation, Patience, Labour, Cheerfulness. We have noted one thing more : how everywhere there are cast shadows.

“The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
• • • • •
Alas ! for this gray shadow, once a man.”

What is a shadow? It is the reflection of something else, but has no substance of its own, and when it passes away leaves no trace of its former presence. And what is the farm-house itself? It may be Elizabethan, with low ceilings carried on great beams, and deep-seated window-sills with quaint diamond-shaped panes: or it may be a building not twenty years old: in either case it is a shadow, a reflection,

a thing which will pass away leaving no trace ; and though it remain for many hundred years yet, all those years shall be as nothing. There were farm-houses in the land before our present houses were built : where are they ? They have no abiding, and like as a dream when one awaketh, so in time will the image of our present houses vanish.

And men whose shadows fall everywhere on the ground, they will pass away too. Our forefathers are gone, and the land retains but the memory of few of them. We shall follow. "Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding."

And the world whose shade too, in its turn, is flung across space, that too will depart, with the Heavens that now are, and come no more into mind. "The earth passeth away, and the lust thereof."

O my friends ! Life seems so real to us, its delights so sweet, its griefs so heavy, its work so ceaseless : yet it is all unsubstantial : it is but the shadow of reality. A dream passes ; it has no continuance ; we wonder when we wake at its having seemed so true. A shadow passes ; it does not even while it lasts reflect truly the shape from which it fell : it goes away and its trace can nowhere be found. Such is man and his life.

But the shadow *is* a reflection. A sort of forecast

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of something that shall endure. And the shade which goes along at our side, and from which we cannot escape if we walk in light, is the daily warning that earth shall lose itself in eternity.

Our homes where the warm light greets us, and such bright smiles and welcome after the toil of day, are a dim reflection of the house above, not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. Our bodies a reflection of that body of the resurrection, which shall arise by the power of God incorruptible and undefiled, to remain for ever. Our universe which now is, a reflection of the new Heavens and new earth where the redeemed shall live, and sorrow and sighing be fled away. A Land too which shall abide. The deeds of our life, the summing up of what we have done, and what God's Grace has done in us, they also will be had in remembrance when all transient things shall be no more. And Jesus Christ, the great Harvester, He will be in His own Country, where are no shadows, with the souls whom He has garnered, and will never leave them through the ages evermore.

Is not that reality worth living for: more than the going in and out among things that perish, as if they were all we had to care for? Blessed are they who so use the possessions of earth that leaving them they may enter into eternal habitations.

SOWING AND REAPING.

BY S. BARING-GOULD, M.A.

GAL. VI. 7.

“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

S. PAUL, in this passage, states a fact which we do not doubt, a fact patent to common sense. We no more look for a field to produce wheat, if we have sown it with veitches, than we look for grapes on thorns, or figs on thistles. Not only so, but we know very well that if we sow nothing, we shall reap worse than nothing. If we put no good seed into the ground, it will give a crop of weeds.

Perhaps the anecdote may be familiar to some of you that is told of Coleridge and Thurlow. The latter strongly disapproved of giving children a Christian religious education, because he said it was prejudicing their minds before they had come to years of discretion to judge for themselves. Some time after that Thurlow visited Coleridge, who took

him into his garden, which he found perfectly uncultivated, full of thistles, and nettles, and brambles. "Why," exclaimed the visitor, "What a garden you have ! call this a garden ! I call it a wilderness."

"O !" answered Coleridge with a smile, "I am waiting till this patch of ground has come to years of discretion before the thistles are made to give place to strawberries, and the nettles to lilies."

Now the simple truth that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, is so simple, that we should have thought it really was not worth the Apostle's while laying it down.

It is something we see and act on every year. We take our garden-beds, and divide them up : here is to be a row of peas, there a row of beans, there again a patch of potatoes, here we will have broccoli, and so forth, and as we arrange to harvest so we sow. We do not put in potatoes where we want a row of scarlet runners. The farmer acts in the same way. He tills his fields with what he intends to harvest out of these fields. Now the harvest has been gathered in, barley here, oats there, and here was wheat, barley grown where barley was sown, oats harvested where oats was sown, and the waving golden wheat made that field of glory where wheat had been sown.

I say again, this is so obvious to common sense,

that we ask in wonder, Why did S. Paul think it worth his while to write down the words "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap?"

But S. Paul laid great stress on these words. He thought that if very obvious they were yet very important. He prefaces them with these remarkable words, "Be not deceived ; God is not mocked," then he goes on, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

I will tell you why he says this—because though this be a truth none but a fool fails to acknowledge and act upon in the things of this life, it is a truth only a few acknowledge and act upon in things that concern the life to come.

In spiritual matters, a good many suppose that they may sow wild oats and reap blessings, plant bad habits and grow Christian graces off them. Or they suppose that in the economy of the Christian covenant, they can get everything they want from God, without giving Him anything. S. Paul found that there were people of that persuasion in his time, and therefore he spoke very sternly to them, "Be not deceived ; God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," and he goes on, "He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption : but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Then he goes on with a word against

discouragement, "Let us not be weary in doing well ; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." This is again an appeal to our observation, and to our common sense. He says, in other words, Look about you, and see that a long time elapses between sowing and reaping. The seed is sown in Autumn, or in Spring, then it slowly germinates, then grows up, leafs, and flowers, and slowly the grain forms in the ear and ripens. Well ! if in the harvest of earthly fruit you are content to wait, so in the harvest of spiritual fruit you must be content to wait. It is only toadstools that spring up in a night ; Jonah's gourds that start to perfection one day and are dead the next. That which is good and abiding is slow in maturing. In spiritual graces, the process is, first the blade, then the ear, after that, the full corn in the ear.

But I am not going to address you this evening on the growth of what is spiritual, and the time it takes to reach perfection, but on the principle of *Give* and *Get* in religion.

We are very much disposed to let our religion be all of getting, and not any giving, to expect God to do everything for us, to make figs grow on thorns and grapes on thistles,—we to do nothing whatever ourselves for God. That in religion is to expect to reap where we have not sown.

We like to take half of the Gospel, and turn our backs on the other half. The Gospel is, indeed, full of glorious promises. It assures pardon to the sinner, restoration to the fallen; we are ready to say that we are sinners and fallen, and we conclude *therefore* we shall be pardoned and restored. But we forget, or do not choose to remember, that something is required of us. We must do our part, if God is to pardon and restore. We must repent; and repentance is no empty form, it is a deep-going radical matter, it is sincere and thorough. If we will reap pardon we must sow the seeds of it, in true repentance. We must *give* God a broken and contrite heart, and He in return will give us His forgiveness.

Now let us see what are some of those things that God asks of us :—some of those things we are required to give to God, in order that we may get the riches of His grace and the reward of eternal life.

In the first place, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.” God asks us to give Him our love. If we do that we are giving Him what He most desires. “My son,” He says, “give Me thine heart.”

God is our Father, and a father expects love, and the obedience that springs from love, in his son. There is nothing shocks us more than want of affection

and undutifulness in a child ; and we say that a bad son makes a bad man, and never comes to prosperity.

Surely then we owe the highest love and obedience to our Heavenly Father, who is the true author of our being, and giver of all we possess. And, indeed, this is insisted on repeatedly in Holy Scripture. "God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. We love Him because He first loved us. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments : and His commandments are not grievous." "Little children, let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil."

So then one of the first things that God asks us to give Him is our love. Moreover, says the Apostle, "Let us not love in word, but in deed," and we shall give proof of our love by our endeavours to keep His commandments, to do His will, to abstain from those things that displease Him, and to cultivate those graces that are well pleasing in His sight.

What abundance of harvest blessings there is for him who loves God ! He who sows love to God will indeed of Him reap love unbounded, overflowing.

The second thing that God asks us to *give* Him is our worship. In the Second Commandment He forbids that the worship He claims for Himself shall

be given to false gods. In the Third Commandment He requires that His Name shall be honoured ; and in the Fourth that His Day shall be respected and kept.

Now He has instituted the Lord's Day for two things. First, as a day of rest to us from worldly avocations ; secondly, as a day on which worship shall be given to Him. Or rather, let me say, He has made it a day of rest from worldly labours *in order* that we may have leisure to give Him in His courts the homage which is His due.

Now see ! Do we not make this institution an occasion of taking and not of giving ? We take the rest, lie in bed and lounge about ; but a vast majority of those who accept the Lord's Day as a day of rest for themselves do not make it a Lord's Day at all, but a Lazy Day : they take what is given to them, but do not give to God the worship, for the giving of which the day is especially set apart.

“ He that offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me,” says God. But how many assemble on Sunday in His Courts to give Him thanks and praise ? What percentage out of those who are taking advantage of the rest ? Perhaps eight out of one hundred. Remember that public worship is a *duty* owed to God as your Creator, your King, and your

Father. He expects it of you, and if you withhold it, you must not expect to receive abundant blessing from Him.

The third thing that God asks us to give Him is our prayer. He bids us again and again to ask if we would receive. He gives to those who ask, He giveth liberally, and stinteth not.

You are ready enough to expect to receive Divine help, abundant mercy, plentiful salvation, eternal blessedness,—but—Do you ask for it? Do you pray earnestly, really, frequently?

How much time is given to God? How many of your thoughts are given to God? How much sincerity is given to God? How many words are given to God? Not many. You want to get without the trouble of giving. Alas! my brethren, you are deceiving your own souls if you hug the belief that you have nothing to do under the Christian dispensation. You have a great deal to do. God does an infinite deal for you, but *conditionally*. You must give if you would receive.

This is one lesson the harvest may well teach you: Be givers to God—givers of love, givers of worship weekly, givers of prayer, that ye may be receivers, and receivers ye will be in over-flowing measure.

“Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

THE GREAT HARVEST HOME.

BY THE REV. J. LOUIS SPENCER, B.D.

S. MATT. XIII. 39. (pt.)

“The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.”

THESE words were spoken at the close of a hard day's toil. Through the long hours of the day, underneath the burning rays of an Eastern sun, our Lord had been surrounded by eager crowds, now pressing to hear His wonderful parables, now straining their eyes to behold some sign.

In the early morning a council of the Pharisees had been held to see how they might destroy Him. His words were creating profound impressions upon men's hearts, and the masses—the plain country folk—the common people, heard Him gladly. He had a large and increasing number of followers. His signs were becoming notorious. He must be silenced, and it must be the silence of the grave. Our

Lord's perfect knowledge revealed to Him the plot of this hostile faction, and He "withdrew from thence."

Then follow a group of striking parables, much conversation, many harassing questions, and the healing of many, among the number a poor fellow possessed with a devil, blind and dumb.

It is now evening. The lake, now forsaken, is reflecting the long slanting rays of the sun, setting in all its grandeur. The peaks of the surrounding hills become sharp and clear, the labourer's task is over, the ship has been drawn up on the beach, and our dear Lord has left the multitudes. Notice that word *left*. On other remarkable occasions He "sends them away"—with a kindly farewell and a parting blessing, but there was something in that crowd of hearers and sightseers that was utterly alien to our Lord's Spirit, and so He left them, as though He knew that they were not His friends. He is now in the house, and His disciples are with Him, Peter, and James, and John, and the others. Surely He will find rest now? But now the disciples have their questions to ask Him. What was the meaning of that parable of the tares of the field? It was a hard saying as they listened to it on the seashore. Could He mean one of them, when He spoke of an enemy sowing tares? Surely there was no

traitor in their little band? Still their hearts were uneasy, and they come to Him in the quiet of the evening, and ask Him to explain the parable of the tares of the field, and then a rich mass of light is poured upon the whole picture. He Himself, He tells them, is the sower of the good seed. The field is the world. The good seed are the sons of the Kingdom, and the tares are the sons of the evil one. The enemy is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. Here we have a Divine comment on a portion of Holy Scripture. The Eternal Word explains His own Word, and unfolds His plan of the future. We see beneath the surface of things. We see beyond the veil. Men's souls are ranged into two opposite hosts, "the sons of the Kingdom and the sons of the evil one."

As our Lord sat in the ship that afternoon, and watched that mass of human souls struggling for places near the ship, He read all their hearts. He saw the plan maturing in one heart to lurk about a neighbour's field, and ruin the next year's harvest. He heard the muttered threat—heard even now in the unchangeable East—"I will plant the perum perandi in his grounds." Glancing then into the spiritual world surrounding them, He saw the same work of sowing going on, only in an intensified form. Here

was injury being done to one man's harvest. There the field was the world. Here one villain, lurking here and there, was sowing his tares. There, in the great field of the world, the devil and his innumerable horde of angels were ever busy at work dropping the tares into sleeping hearts. He saw two harvests, one in the fields hard by, the other in which souls were reaped, some for God's Garner, other "in bundles for the burning." The joy of the reapers on the slopes surrounding them was a faint image of the joy in the presence of the angels of God as each redeemed soul passed through the golden gates.

The harvest is the end of the world. This was not a new figure of speech to our Lord's hearers. In the darkest days of their history, the holy prophet Joel had pictured the final doom of the multitudes in the valley of decision under the image of a harvest field. "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe ; come, get you down, for the press is full, the fats overflow, for their wickedness is great." What strange, mysterious unity underlies the whole field of Holy Scripture ! The Holy Spirit, the Finger of God, has blended all the various portions together into one Divine revelation. In the dim ages of the past, again, when the fulness of the time was come, and once again, towards the close of the Revelation, we have

this picture of the harvest of the earth—the voice that spake by the Prophet, and the voice heard by S. John in his solitude, still utters the same command, “Thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

What a beautiful and comforting thought ! Let us think one moment on that great Harvest Home. May God’s Holy Spirit help us to take these things to heart, and thus ripen our souls for that blessed day of Harvest.

I. Let us think, first of all, on the victory of harvest. The harvest field is the scene of a great victory. The conflict between man and the elements, between man and the earth, began the moment God’s curse was uttered. Then it was that thorns and thistles sprang up on every side, and the earth had to be subdued. The message had gone forth, “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.” Hence in Holy Scripture the joy of the harvest field is likened to the joy of the victors dividing the spoil. The anxious days of preparing the soil and sowing the seed are over. The long dark nights of winter, the March winds and April showers, the balmy days of early Summer, have all passed away, and during those days a struggle, though unseen, was taking place between man’s labour and the effects of

God's curse upon the earth. The harvest field is therefore a token of man's victory, and we celebrate this victory year by year, we sing our hymns of victory, and offer upon God's Altar our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving—our bounden duty and service, for His banner over us is love.

Yes, and the Great Harvest Field is a day of victory, too! In this world ye shall have tribulation, our Lord says. Here we are bruised and beaten and tossed about just as corn is by the threshing instrument, and the plowers upon our back have made long their furrows. Satan tries hard to have us. Our spiritual foes press on. We are tried day by day. Sometimes everything seems very dark, and we are weary and heavy laden; the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds of temptation blow and beat upon our house, and then we lift up our hearts and look beyond the storm-clouds to the glorious Harvest Day. Just as the husbandman strides along scattering his good seed, believing that out of the frosty skies gentle breezes shall blow, and soft showers shall fall, and Summer suns shall shine, and, looking forward, sees the golden corn waving beneath the harvest moon; so the soldier of Jesus Christ walks by faith, not by sight, he also looks to the end, "Faith antedates the hymns of glory, every man that hath this

grace is as certain that there are glories for him, if he perseveres in duty, as if he heard and sung the thanksgiving song for the blessed sentence of the Great Harvest Day."

"The morning shall awaken,
The shadows shall decay,
And each true-hearted servant
Shall shine as doth the day."

II. But before the victory must come the fight. The sowing in tears must often precede the reaping in joy. Is the picture of sowing in tears overdrawn, or what does it mean? It means that some poor husbandman must take his last handful of corn for seed. He must risk his all for the sake of reaping in joy. In seasons of great scarcity the peasant in the East parts in sorrow with every measure of precious corn. "It is," writes one who knew the country well, "like taking bread out of the mouths of their children, and in such times many bitter tears are actually shed over it." They that sow in tears shall afterwards, through God's blessing, reap in joy.

So there is to us a sowing in tears. We have often to leave all, friends, relations, country, home, *all*, when God calls us. The Cross of Jesus Christ has a strange attractive power, it draws us out of the world, nay, even out of ourselves; we lose ourselves and we

become new creatures. Friends call us back, they try to discourage us, but onward we must go, we cannot help ourselves at such times; like the great Apostle, we feel that necessity is laid upon us, others may look back, but our faces are set towards Jerusalem. It was ever so, not only with the saints of the early days, but with the saints of our own times. How little recked they the sowing in tears! Let us kneel in thought by that lonely grave in the heart of Africa. There, by that little cross, Bishop Mackenzie sleeps on and takes his rest. His was a sowing in tears. Come again with me to one of those distant islands, and learn the story of Bishop Patteson's martyrdom. There, among the rude savages, he sowed in tears. Again, see that lonely Missionary, in the wilds of India, reading his Bible, his sole companion and comfort in his terrible prison. That is Henry Martyn, a Priest of the Church of England. He has torn himself from his beloved University, of which he was one of the choicest spirits; neither home, nor even the love of a pure English heart, could keep him from obeying this call of the Master. Yes, and think of that hero, that watchman straining his eyes over the battlements of Kartoum, and sowing the seeds of civilization in the waste places of Africa; all these shall come again and bring their sheaves with them.

And shall we be weary in well-doing? No! The Harvest Day of the world is coming, when all who have passed through much tribulation, and washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb, shall stand before His Throne, when all those who have lived unselfish lives shall reap their everlasting reward. There shall be joy that day such as is now heard in the harvest fields, for it will be the great Harvest Home of the world. The struggle will be over, the sowing in tears past, and "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Amen.

HARVEST LESSONS.

BY THE LATE

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JEREMIAH V. 24.

“Neither say they in their hearts, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season : He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.”

THESE words are part of the prophet Jeremiah's expostulation with the Jews, and they have lately been read in the order of the Church's first lesson. Jeremiah here upbraids the Jews for their contempt of God, for leaving Him out of mind, for taking no notice of His wonder-working ways, for disregard of His mercies, for going away from God and forgetting Him. “This people hath a revolting and rebellious heart ; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season :

He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

Now, it will not be said that we are open to the reproach of the prophet. We *do* fear the Lord our God; we *do* remember what He has done for us. The appearance of this Church to-day, dressed with fruits and flowers, the attendance of so many worshippers, is a proof that God is not wholly out of our thoughts, that we acknowledge His Hand, that we desire to thank Him for His mercy and goodness, who has once again "reserved to us" the accustomed "weeks of the harvest." Our harvest thanksgiving, and the harvest thanksgivings in many other parishes round us, will at least clear us of the reproach of forgetting God, and I shall not need to make a comparison between the conduct of the Jews and our own conduct in this particular.

In taking these words for my text I shall regard them simply as a handle on which to hang some remarks upon the goodness and faithfulness of God, which is displayed in the harvest, and upon the obligation which that goodness and faithfulness lays upon us who are the recipients of His bounty.

And first of all, the harvest witnesses to the unchangeableness of God, as seen in the sure and certain fulfilment of His promise—"while the earth remaineth

seed-time and *harvest*, and cold and heat, and Summer and Winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

That promise was made by God to Noah in the day that he came out of the Ark, and began his life in a restored world; and that promise has never failed. For unnumbered years, for unnumbered centuries of years, man has been on God's earth, a toiling, thinking, reasoning creature, and during all that time man has been sustained—kept alive—by the recurrence of the harvest. All harvests (I grant it) have not been alike. There have been cycles—successions of good harvests, followed by cycles of indifferent harvests, years of scarcity, but never in all the tract of ages has the harvest utterly and entirely failed: cold and heat, Summer and Winter, seed-time and harvest have never ceased. On that unchangeableness of God we build as upon a firm rock; not simply for bread, which is the staff of our bodily life, but for the fulfilment of all that He has promised—all that He has threatened in His Book. "With Him," with our God (as the Apostle has finely said), "there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning: He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." There is a thought good for us to entertain, which the harvest should teach us—how sure and certain is God's Word! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or

one tittle of what He has spoken shall pass away, all shall be fulfilled. If a man can break God's covenant of the day and night, or God's covenant of the harvest, or of the seasons, then, and not otherwise, shall His covenant of peace be removed ; then, but not otherwise, shall there be a possibility of change in His merciful disposition towards mankind. "The mountains shall depart (says the great prophet Isaiah), and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee."

Another lesson that the harvest must always teach us, is that God looks for fruit from His creatures. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until it receiveth the former and the latter rain ;" and so does God deal with us. He waiteth, He hath long patience, He pours down upon us through divers channels the dew of His blessing ; and for this end, that we may give Him "fruits of increase"—fruits of righteousness, fruits to be gathered into His garner—the product and practice of a truly Christian life. This is everywhere the teaching of God in the Bible, and the teaching of God in the book of Nature. The barren life, like the barren tree, has no place in God's vineyard. "The earth" (and it is the same with the Christian soul),

“the earth that drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God ; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected.” Not, surely, not always enough do we bear in mind the repeated warnings against unprofitableness, or else we should give greater diligence to add to our faith those fruits of virtue and temperance, brotherly kindness and charity, which, if they be in a man, make him to be what God approves—“neither barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Again, the harvest of the earth’s produce must recall to us another Harvest: even that Harvest of souls which are ripening in all parts of the world, but which are in danger of being lost for lack of hands to gather them. “The Harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest that He would send forth labourers into His Harvest,” said our Lord, as His pitying eye surveyed the multitude, faint, and “scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd:” and how often since have His words been used for the text of a Missionary Sermon! And how true they are! What is wanted everywhere are hands and hearts strong to labour in the Gospel field. Incessant is the cry, “Come over and help us.” It comes to us from all quarters, East,

West, North, and South, from all quarters of that wide dominion of England, on which it is our boast that the sun never sets. "Come over and help us," there is a dearth in the land—not of bread, not a thirst for water, but for hearing the Word of the Lord. Can we hear that cry, and make as though we heard not? Shall we not in our day, and with our opportunities, if we cannot go ourselves, seek and send out fit harvestmen to reap God's Harvest in the earth.

"Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation! oh salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till each remotest nation
Has learnt Messiah's Name."

Yes, the harvest recalls to us what a crop of souls are still ungathered for God on the earth. What multitudes there are of heathen still in the world, who have not yet had even the opportunity of knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Aye! and at home, in our Christian England, what multitudes are there who are as ignorant as the very heathen of the true God and Jesus Christ! What multitudes in town and city and village who lead practically the

life of the heathen ! nay, worse than the life of the heathen, for the heathen *do* pray, *do* believe in a God, *do* worship Him, ignorantly indeed, but still do worship Him : while at home, in England, what multitudes are there who never pray, hold no belief, are seen in no place of worship : who have said in their hearts, "There is no God"—"let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die !"

And shall we feel no pity for these, our brethren, men of our own race and blood, who are thus blinded to their best and eternal interests ? Shall we see them, like corn that has been overtaken by the tempest, storm-broken, soiled, and entangled with weeds, and not hasten to their help, do what we can, and whenever we can, to disentangle them from their chain of error, to raise them up, and set their feet upon the rock, and order their ways ? Shall we not at least make mention of them in our prayers, and pray that He who commanded the light to shine on the darkness, would shine upon their darkened hearts, and give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Once again, the harvest is a shadow and type of the Final Judgment—intended and declared to be a type and shadow by Him who will be the Judge. The reaping, the binding into sheaves, the carrying home,

the threshing out, the sifting and separating of the good corn from the weed and chaff and withered grain, who does not see how it all serves to represent the Judgment, as Jesus Christ has revealed it to us in His Gospel?

And it is this which must always give a great seriousness to this season. Who that is of a sober, thoughtful turn of mind, who looks only a little before him into the great, unknown future, who that cares at all about his soul, who, I say, that is of this turn of mind, can pass this season without some thought, some questioning, as to his own hereafter? Will he not, as he follows the operations of harvest, as he goes about his work in the harvest field, be it as labourer, or employer, or only looker on, find himself recalling the words of that great parable of the tares—"The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the Kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels?"

To conclude: such are some of the many spiritual lessons which each successive harvest teaches. To sum them up in one, it is God's yearly call to us to trust in Him, to fear Him, to love Him, and to cast all our care on Him, who, in spite of our cold

hearts, our murmuring and practical forgetfulness of Him, keeps true to His promise—continues to us year by year the accustomed weeks of the harvest. In return for these mercies, the least we can do is to shew ourselves thankful, to come into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise, and with one voice and one soul lift up our hands in the Sanctuary and “praise the Lord.” Yes, “Praise the Lord with me, and let us magnify His Name together.” Let your songs be of Him, and let your talking be of all His wondrous works. “Praise the Lord, and forget not all His benefits.” “Thou hast not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our wickedness,” but hast been merciful unto us and blessed us. We will acknowledge Thy goodness, we will not pass it by unremembered—our mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord. “How excellent is Thy Name in all the world!”

THE OPENED STOREHOUSES.

BY THE REV. W. FRASER, M.A.,

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GEN. XLI. 56.

"Joseph opened all the storehouses."

It was a custom of the Athenian women each year to make a picture of famine, and then to drive it out of their city, saying, "Out famine, In food ; Out penury, In plenty." The Christian cry might well be, "Out sin, In sanctity ; Out profaneness, In piety," for famine has often been the instrument of punishment for wickedness upon a nation or people. The earth locks up her treasures, and the fruitful land becomes barren. Scarcity is succeeded by want, and then follow the sufferings and knowings of hunger, when men would gladly barter all the gold of earth for one morsel of bread. The apparent cause may be easy to explain. Perhaps drought has dried up vegetation, or the sudden inroad of the enemy has trampled down the fair harvest fields, or the locust or caterpillar has

checked the growth of seed or plant. But beyond this there is another reason. We look behind Nature and we behold God. He it is, the Psalmist tells us, that turneth a "fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." (Ps. cvii. 34.)

"There's nothing dark, below, above,
But in its gloom I trace Thy love,
And meekly wait that moment, when
Thy touch shall turn all bright again!"

It was so with Egypt. The years of plenty had been followed by the years of grievous famine. Behind the natural cause, God was making Himself known to Egypt and its king. It was a message of mercy and love for its people, and to this end, Jehovah put it into the heart of Pharaoh to appoint Joseph, in whom was the Spirit of God, that he might adopt measures to save the people from a death of starvation. Appointed governor over all the land, he gathered up the fifth part during the years of abundance, and filled large granaries which he had built, with all manner of store. And then, when the years of grievous famine came, the people cried for bread, and Pharaoh bade them go unto Joseph, and "Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians."

For us, beloved, the earth has unlocked her treasures, we have gathered in her produce, and our

barns are filled with plenty. During Autumn and Winter, Spring and Summer, men have toiled with care and anxiety, to reap the corruptible food of earth. God has satisfied our temporal wants, and our Winter's supply is ready at hand. But, while our thoughts have been occupied with filling our earthly barns, let us listen to the words of our great Storehouse Keeper, saying, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." While God raised up Joseph to save men from famine, He, too, of His sovereign grace, raised up Jesus, that He might give unto us the Bread of Life.

1. *Joseph filled the storehouses.* The king had appointed him to this work. All things had been given into his hand by Pharaoh, and no one else was authorized to carry out this storage. As soon, then, as the earth brought forth by handfuls in the years of plenty, he laid up the food in the cities. On a magnificent scale, and at convenient places, granaries were built, and then he "gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left off numbering; for it was without number." Great as this was, how infinitely has it been surpassed by Jesus Christ! Was He not fore-ordained for this purpose, and did not the King of kings give the work into His Hands? "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me," are His words. "All men should

honour the Son even as they honour the Father." And what a vast storehouse has He filled with the riches of His grace. High up it is upon a mountain summit, where it can catch the earliest sunbeam, and be gilded by the last ray, and, while darkness falls on the valleys beneath, radiance tarries on its lofty peaks. And that house is filled with all manner of store. There is no want but is prepared for, no kind of food that is not ready to hand. The corn of earth is there for human sustenance. The Bread of Life for spiritual hunger. For the naked, clothing; for the afflicted, comfort; for all, eternal life. Jesus has filled it with every attractive blessing, that men may be induced to come and partake.

II. But Joseph *opened* all the storehouses. Not enough to have filled them, they must be opened. Had they been kept closed during the years of famine the people would all have died of hunger. But when in the king's name they came to Joseph and cried for bread, did he refuse to hear? No! he opened the storehouses, and sold them food, and preserved life.

And did not Jesus come down from His throne of glory, and making Himself of no reputation, but taking the form of a servant, open out all His treasures? Nothing was kept back. Every blessing needful was opened to a starving world. What had it to live upon?

What were the waters of the Red Sea, streams of Marah, the manna of the desert, rest of Canaan, but types and shadows which had all passed away? But Jesus displayed His gifts from the granary of Heaven. To man was then offered the Grace of Baptism; the bitterness of Marah was changed to sweetness by the wood of the Cross; the True Manna was freely given, and the "Kingdom of Heaven opened to all believers." The proclamation was, "I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever." O the unsearchable riches of His grace, when the world's barns are emptiest, the storehouses of His blessings are fullest; and when riches, glory and honour pass away, we have pardon, purity and peace!

III. Joseph opened them at *the right time*. All the land of Egypt was famished. The famine was over the whole face of the earth. Had they been opened during the years of plenty, the produce might have been wasted; or, after the years of famine, the corn would not have availed to save life. But they were opened just at the time the food was needed. And when did the world more need refreshment than when Christ came? Was it not to a starving humanity He offered a multitude of blessings? Man had long walked in darkness, groping about for a food better

than earth could bestow ; seeking repose, but finding none. The world's night seemed darkest then. The cry of misery and oppression was heard from all sides. Hope was dim, and faith weak, and men yearned for a life where there should be freedom, and peace and joy. But light at last shined, and dispelled the darkness. The Sun of Righteousness arose upon a benighted world, and the Gospel told of mercy, peace and eternity. The cry was "*now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." Men woke up from a troubled dream, beheld one another with new affections, and yielded their money, lands and persons that they might thereby obtain the inestimable blessings of life eternal. As the shadow of Peter healed the sick in the streets as it swept over them, so Christianity passes through the earth like a spirit of health, and miserable and fallen men start up and live.

iv. Lastly, *Joseph sent none away empty*. The food was abundant. There was no need to be in want. Every Egyptian, or stranger from a far country, without distinction, could come and buy corn. "All countries," it is said, "came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn."

And was ever soul sent empty away from Jesus ? Was the food of life refused to the very vilest sinner ? Why, young and old, rich and poor, humanity of all

ages, people and nations, alike received bread, and alike were treated with compassion and mercy. The Egyptians had to part with their money and lands in order that Joseph might give them bread. But the cry of the Gospel was, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Sinners, betrayers, enemies, all had Heavenly food as a free gift. Did little ones come to His storehouse and His disciples bid them away? Cries Jesus, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." Did the leper apply for cleansing, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt thou canst make me clean?" Jesus, touching him whom no unleprous hand dare touch, said, "I will, be thou clean." Did a weeping sinner come to the door and wash His Sacred Feet, and wipe them with the locks of her hair? Jesus cries, "Woman, thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." Nay, was He not nailed to the Cross of Agony, and did not a wretched malefactor, turning his dying eyes upon Him, cry, "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom?" Jesus cries, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Was ever applicant turned away? Was ever succour refused? Oh! no, on that storehouse was written in

letters of gold, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

Seeing then, beloved, that Jesus our Saviour has opened His storehouses—that He has unlocked the treasures of the earth, and filled our barns with plenty—seeing, too, that He is holding out for our acceptance all manner of blessing, let us beware of dying within sight of the granaries. Of any of us let it not be said, "Behold thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof." The Egyptians gladly yielded up all, riches, land, even their own persons, that their lives might be preserved. Let us offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable sacrifice, that we may so buy the Bread of Life, and live for ever. Let all inordinate appetite for earthly things, be vanquished by the nobler portion in Christ. Then shall the spiritual taste be changed—then shall we desire, and be filled with living bread, until the last harvest is reaped, when we "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes."

JOY IN HARVEST.

BY THE REV. C. G. H. BASKCOMB, M.A.

ISAIAH IX. 3.

“They joy Before Thee according to the joy in harvest.”

THE season of harvest is one which speaks to us of completion. All is then about to be finished of the chief toil-season of Nature. Men are hastening to gather in the scattered fruits of the earth before the wild wind howls with the first chilly breath of approaching Winter.

How our hearts long for completion! Do we wish, for example, to be “perfect and complete in all the Will of God?” Such a longing cannot be satisfied in this world in full measure and Heavenly degree. These partly unsatisfied desires, this hungering and thirsting after righteousness, leave a sense of incompleteness, which makes the yearning soul desire a more perfect state, when it may awake up after the Divine likeness.

It is completeness and completion which make

harvest what it is—the great Triumph Song—the ultimate chorus of Nature. She has had in Spring her outbursts of triumphant song; the birds have joined in choruses from that bowery thicket, from this leafy dell; they have said their say, and sung their song. But joyful hills and laughing valleys must have their Feast Day too, or else the vegetable world would not share the joy of the animal, and so their turn comes later on, and with it Nature lifts up her voice in, as it were, one last gigantic effort, and then collapses in exhausted strength, and dies down in dead, dull Winter, the better to rise anew and live again when Spring shall attune her reedy pipe once more.

Yet how noble is the death which Nature dies each year. “The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.” The sheaf of corn which cometh in its season is the fruit of Nature’s good works, her unfailing obedience to laws of Divine institution, just as the way and deeds of the righteous encircle their heads with a diadem of glory. Harvest is Nature’s final crown, and verily it is of golden hue, for the corn-fields waving in the sunlight remind us of some shimmering cloth of gold.

What wonder if the prophet Isaiah, in rapturous praise depicting the mighty outcome of Messiah’s Birth, and showing how thereby the people that sat in

darkness should see a great light, and that light should shine upon such as dwelt in the shadow of death—what wonder if, when giving inspired utterance to such glorious results of the Incarnate Saviour's Birth, he should seek him out, among all the metaphors and images that lay outstretched before his mind's eye, a simple, short allusion to harvest, in order to describe the boundless joy of everlasting freedom felt by nations once groping in grievous dimness of soul and vexation of spirit. "They joy before Thee"—*how* do they joy? What of things on earth shall set forth the nature and greatness of their joy, or what, at any rate, shall come near thereto? "They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest." That is our joy now, in greater or in less degree, in that measure wherewith our Heavenly Father hath meted out to us the particular gladness (absolute or qualified, full or partial) of this present season.

If an earthly harvest be worthy of so high a testimony to its joyful character as that which the Prophet gives it, what shall we say of that last Great Harvest, when the King of Saints makes up His jewels, and the "Holy, awful Reaper" gathers into the garner of God the sheaves, which are His people? In this country our harvest joy is liable to be limited and checked by unfavourable conditions of climate and season. But

in the great Spiritual Harvest the mean between the two extremes of joy and woe will be unknown. Then all must be joy, or all sorrow. Oh ! that we may know the one, but never the other !

Doubtless there is a good deal of training in our earthly harvests (and in the spirit in which we receive them) for the final ingathering at the last great day.

In the first place, our hearts should know no bound to gratitude. Whatever we receive at God's Hands, be it great or small, is beyond our deserts. Do we constantly realize that the great Creator might have caused that seed-time and harvest should fail and cease, but that He Who set His bow in the cloud allows the sun to shine in the firmament of the Heaven, and to pour down his faithful rays upon the unthankful and the evil, the better to win our hearts to the God Who makes, redeems and sanctifies us, and to enable us to rejoice with a joy above the joy of harvest in the sunshine of His love ?

Then, again, the way in which we do our work is all-important.

We gather in our harvests—we rejoice in them. Well, it is good to rejoice. "Rejoice evermore" is a Divine injunction. But let us spare one moment to ask ourselves of what kind our joy is. Is it a joy we are not ashamed of in the sight of Him who alone is

the Author and Finisher of all our true joy? The harvest field is a scene of human labour, and there, as elsewhere, we are on our trial, and our behaviour there may affect our position when Christ comes to gather in His own.

How in harvest may men be happy fellow-workers in a work which God hath blessed since the days of the deluge and of Noah. Never is it more true than at eventide in Autumn (when the harvestman returns from his labours), that "something attempted, something done, has earned a night's repose." Let the workers in harvest never forget that they are engaged in God's work. For the fruits of the earth come from God, and He wills that they should be gathered in, therefore harvest work is very full of dignity. All rough words, all wrangling, all doubtful conversation, must surely be out of place among such as are occupied in so honourable a work—among reapers in our Father's earthly harvest fields.

And is there not a word for gleaners, too?

How glad their office when, as in some places is the custom, the Church bell rings at eight o'clock to summon women and children to meet and go in concert to the almost emptied field! They are running life's race together, they start together to the scene of work, that none may begin before all are ready.

Usually their life and labours lie in the village, amid village homes, but now it is on the open upland, or in fertile vale. Let them ever remember, as they glean in the field after the reapers, that one womanly figure in Holy Scripture has consecrated harvest work, and rendered it a high and blessed employ !

Ruth, the Moabitess—Ruth, the unselfish, loving, thoughtful daughter-in-law of Naomi, has given a name to one Book of Sacred Writ.

No trifling portion of her history has reference to the harvest field. She had dealt kindly "with the dead," and with surviving Naomi.

Next she is seen as a pattern of industry and modesty in the fields of Boaz. There she gleans, and gleaning, prospers. The Lord dealt kindly with her, according to the prayer of her mother-in-law. The scene of harvest labour formed the key to the remainder of her history ; the events of her after-life turned upon her conduct in hours of harvest toil. Boaz—a good man—saw goodness in Ruth ; he took notice of, and rewarded her for work done quietly, modestly.

Of course the case of Ruth was an exception, but in some respects it was no exception, certainly not in this, that work well done, with heartiness and the earnest desire to be single-minded and pure, is sure to be rewarded. The reward may not always come at

once (rewards rarely do), but, though it tarry, it will come, here or hereafter. The harvest field, too, is the same trial-place to all. God sees our work and how we do it, whether in palace or cottage; He watches it also, when cottage doors are locked in harvest time, and there are no children playing in the streets and lanes of the deserted village. All are gone to the field to reap or glean, or look on, save the few who, being crippled, aged, or infirm, are obliged to stay at home. But with nightfall everyone will return to the accustomed homestead, there to build up in some warm corner the precious armfuls they have brought,—those yearly trophies of the often-tired, yet gladsome gleaner,—and then how should “they joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice, when they divide the spoil.”

May we, at the last great ingathering, when at life's eventide we have finished the work which God gave us to do, so come with thankful, humble hearts to the Heavenly home and goal of all our hopes and aspirations, that we may rejoice in the Lord always “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Then shall we have reaped as we have sown; we shall bring our works, we *must* bring them, along with us, whether they be great or small, good or bad,—the tiny pickings and little fragments of works of mercy done for love

of Christ. God will not accept us *because* of them, but yet they are, as it were, stacked up in a house not made with hands, and had in remembrance in the sight of the Lord of the Harvest.

The toilers of this world have only an earthly recompense, which is uncertain and capricious. But they who do their work as and for God, sow and reap for eternity. There is "no shortcoming in the garner of immortality; no blight to mock their hopes; no failure to defraud them of their harvest joy."

At the great reaping day, Jesus and His people will rejoice together. The Heavenly reward will be given, not on account of great outward success in work done here, but according to the measure of faithfulness in our toil.

God, by His Holy Spirit, is ever encouraging all who seek to serve Him truly, that in reaping they may "gather fruit unto life eternal."

Many labourers in the great harvest field of the world have passed away. We are filling now their places. Perhaps they often think of us, and pray for us, and long that we may be helped onward amid struggles, failures, disappointments. Their message to us is to work on, faithfully and honourably, not only in our harvest work in Autumn, but through the length of the year, and all the years we live, so that

whatever good thing our hands find to do, we may "do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men," for we "serve the Lord Christ."

"Come, labour on :

Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain,
When all around him waves the golden grain ;
And to each servant does the Master say,
Go, work to-day?"

" Now go we forth with Holy Church
And join in Harvest-song,
And countless memories, as we sing,
Shall make it sweet and strong ;
And fragrant blossoms of the dales,
And sunshine on the sward,
Shall brighten, with a fairer touch,
This Eucharist of God.

SOWERS AND REAPERS.

BY THE REV. PHILIP NEALE,

Late British Chaplain at Batavia.

S. JOHN IV. 37.

“One soweth and another reapeth.”

A TIRED and weary traveller is resting from the noontide heat by the side of Jacob's well. Thirsty and footsore, He lingers there in the hope of obtaining some of the precious water which springs up far below. We picture, in all reverence, that wearied form, for it is none other than the Lord Himself. He is making the long journey from Jerusalem to Galilee, and He is passing through Samaria on His way. And there He waits by the well for some chance passer-by to give to Him—the Son of God—the simple boon of a drink of water.

His disciples have gone into the city to buy food, and He is left alone awaiting their return. And soon there comes up a Samaritan woman, with whom He converses about the living water which quenches more

than earthly thirst. Her interest grows as she listens to this strange Teacher. Deep spiritual truths are revealed, and in the midst of it all the disciples return with the food that they have been seeking. Hungry and exhausted as the Saviour is, He cares nothing now for the food that has been brought. He is only thinking of the poor sinful woman who has just left Him to return to the city. He sees her fast disappearing in the distance, and His longing to gain that immortal soul is far beyond any earthly hunger or thirst. He had come "to seek and to save that which was lost," and in that Samaritan woman He sees one who has wandered far away, and He longs to bring her back.

And whilst full of thoughts such as these, the disciples interrupt Him with the request that He will eat some of the food which they have just provided. But the Saviour is in no mood for eating. Turning to the disciples, He says, "I have food to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." And then His thoughts travel on to the great future which lies before those disciples. He thinks of the great harvest field of souls in which they are to be the reapers. He has been sowing the good seed, and they shall reap the fruit. All around Him at Sychar lay cultivated

land, with the seed just appearing above the ground. A few more months and it would be ready for the sickle. And just as in the neighbouring fields the seed had taken root and was springing up, with the certainty of harvest yet to come—so, in a spiritual sense, He Himself had sown the good seed, which was already springing up unto life eternal, and the disciples—now surrounding Him—were to be the first reapers. “Lift up your eyes,” He says, “and look upon the fields, for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.” And then come the words of the text, “And herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth.”

Our Lord is here quoting an ancient saying. Some old proverb doubtless—very common among the Jews—owing to the frequent occasions of the harvest fields being plundered by enemies. In other countries, less favoured than our own, there was often much uncertainty as to the crops, for when the fields were ripe for harvest they were frequently plundered, and the fruits of the earth carried off by robbers. In the morning was seen the golden grain, with every promise of a rich ingathering, but before evening the enemy had been at work, and nothing remained but the

worthless stubble. We have an instance of this in the Book of Judges. The Israelites were much oppressed by two powerful nations, Amalek and Midian. For seven years these people encamped against Israel, and destroyed all the increase of the earth. Each year as the crops became ripe the enemy took possession, cut them down, and used them for their own purposes. Ancient history also is full of similar deeds. To so great an extent did this plundering prevail in the East, that it gave rise to the proverb, "One soweth and another reapeth."

And now let us see what harvest lessons can be learnt from the words of the text. There are some deep truths to be gathered from that ancient saying quoted by our Lord at Jacob's well.

First, then, we learn the too often forgotten truth that *we are reaping what others have sown*. The blessings and privileges we enjoy now were not always within our reach. Others have spent long years in sowing, and now we are reaping the result of their labours. How much we have to be thankful for in our own land. Peace and plenty are no strangers to us. Our possessions are secure. Our lives are in no danger. But this has not always been so. The liberty we enjoy now has only been won after many a struggle for freedom. Many a life in bygone years

has been cheerfully laid down for the sake of God, or for the sake of one's country.

Think of those, also, who have suffered for the cause of religion, or who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake. We are reaping what they have sown. How firmly was the Holy Catholic Church established by the blood of the Early Christians. The martyrdoms of S. Stephen and S. James, S. Peter and S. Paul, were not in vain, for "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church."

Think of those who have suffered since in the cause of religious freedom. From the persecutions under the Roman Emperors, down to the martyrs who died in our own land for conscience sake. It was owing to their determined stand, and to their noble efforts, that we now enjoy so much religious liberty. Other men have laboured, and we are entered into their labours.

Look at our Bibles. There was once a time when there was no copy of it in English. It was written in Latin, and very few indeed could read it. But one persevering man spent fifteen years of his life in producing the first English copy. And after all, it was only a written copy, for the art of printing had not then been discovered. Even when the first printed Bible was issued, copies were very scarce. There was only one provided for each parish. It was placed in

the Parish Church, and chained there. Some of these precious volumes are still to be seen. A little time back I found one in a country village. It was dated 1541, and on the covers were the marks showing where the chains had been. And now, how different ! The Bible is within the reach of all. Instead of being the dearest, it is now the cheapest book that we can buy. But remember we are only reaping what others have sown.

Look at our Schools. What advantages there are now in the way of education. A few years ago, how many never learnt to read or write. Now all is fast changing. Very soon—and it cannot be *too* soon—the painful sight of a man or woman unable to sign their own names, or unable to read a word in the Bible, will happily be things of the past.

Look at our Churches. They have been built by others. The House of God in which we worship has been raised without our efforts. And it is the same throughout our favoured land. Dotted here and there, on every side, are the sacred buildings in which God is worshipped, and round which so many associations cling. And, as we look at the old grey tower, or the graceful spire pointing heavenward—both of which add such a charm to our English scenery—let us bear in mind that we are reaping what others have sown.

For herein is that saying true, "One soweth and another reapeth."

Nor should we forget the solemn responsibility of everyone who has special privileges, and does not make use of them. You each one have a Bible. Take care that you read it, lest, in the last great day, that neglected Book only rise up in judgment against you. You have a Church in your very midst, with regular Services and constant means of grace. See that you are never absent from your place without a good reason, and especially try to be a worthy and regular communicant. And do try to make the Services in Church a great reality to yourself; join in the singing, if you can, or, at any rate, join in the responses, and add a solemn "Amen" to the prayers, as if you realized—what is too often forgotten—that you have as much interest in the whole Service as the clergyman has. Every privilege you enjoy only increases your responsibility. "To whom much is given, much also will be required." We cannot reap what others have sown on any other terms. "To whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

And now we come to another side of the subject. Not only are we reapers, but we are also sowers. *We are sowing what others must reap.* Those of you who have just been reaping in the harvest fields outside

will soon be at work again preparing the ground and sowing the seed of next year's crop. And in the same way we are not only reaping what others have sown, but we are also sowing what others must reap.

It is a solemn thought—this power which we each one possess of influencing others. We little think how much we may do in moulding the characters of those around us, either for good or evil. "None of us liveth to himself," and as long as we are in the world we must of necessity influence others. In our everyday life, we cannot help sowing what others shall reap later on. We all have everyday duties to perform, which bring us in contact with others. Our personal influence must make itself felt. The silent influence of our character and conduct is greater than we imagine. We impress and influence those among whom our lot is cast, not only by what we say and do, but by what we leave unsaid, or undone. Let us remember this more than ever, when we take up our work again to-morrow. "One soweth, another reapeth." There are always plenty ready to copy a bad example. There are always lips ready to repeat the profane words that fall from others. There are always minds willing to dwell upon impure thoughts and desires, which have been suggested by others. There are always young and unformed characters which are easily led into the

worst of sins, by the words and actions of others who ought to have known better. "Woe unto the world because of offences. It must needs be that offences come, but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh."

And the parents who bring up their children carelessly, are also sowing what others must reap. If the father or mother have never been seen with a Bible in their hands, if they have never been seen kneeling in prayer, if they neglect Church and Holy Communion, if they speak lightly of sacred things, where will be the responsibility if their children grow up the same? And if, through reaping what we have sown, some immortal soul is lost, how shall we, as the sowers, appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ?

Remember, then, the untold influence which you each one possess. Whatever your position may be, you are the centre of a little circle, where (whether you know it or not) you have the greatest influence. The master with his men, the mistress with her servants, the parents with their children, friends and neighbours in their daily intercourse with each other, all these are sowing what others must reap. But what the harvest shall be God only knows!

"One soweth and another reapeth." Still there remains one concluding lesson to be learnt from these words. How true they are when applied to the

“resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” There comes a time in each one’s experience, when the hand of Death is laid upon some near and dear one. By a lingering illness, or a sudden stroke, we see some precious life fade away, and die. Half the brightness and sunshine of life goes, at least for a time, as we lay to rest in God’s acre our loved and lost. And then the terrible blank which follows, with all the bitterness of its aching void !

“ How oft our thoughts will wander to that grave so new and green,
In fond remembrance picturing the form no longer seen ;
How we miss that welcome voice, how we mark that vacant chair,
For the loved one taken from us seems the one we least can spare.”

But, thank God, there is a brighter side than this. As we stand beside the open grave of the faithful departed, let us ever remember that we are only sowing what Christ shall reap. None of the precious seed thus sown is lost or forgotten. It will surely rise again. “It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.”

“ For though the growth be hidden,
We know that they shall rise,
Yea, even now they ripen,
In sunny Paradise.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Resurrection and

the Life, will one day be the Reaper, gathering into the Heavenly garner the precious seed that we have sown. Each faithful soul, whose sins have been laid down in life at the foot of the Cross, and who has humbly tried to follow in the Saviour's footsteps, will then be accounted worthy to join in the great Harvest Home above.

Let us, then, look calmly forward to that glad reunion yet to come, in patient hope and quiet trust. In simple dependence on our Saviour's merits, and in the strength of the Holy Spirit, let us daily prepare for that final Harvest, by working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. So that, at last, when the work of the sower and the reaper shall both be done, those words of Jesus may come true of each one of us, "that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth may rejoice together."







